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Question Time: Should voting be made mandatory?

Thirty-one countries already do so

By Rob Burgess
Tribune night editor

[**Editor's note:** To participate in future queries, keep an eye on our Twitter and Facebook accounts.]

Compulsory voting may be a foreign idea to Americans, but it's certainly not unheard of in many places around the world.

"Countries that have compulsory voting systems are: Austria, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Fiji, France (senate only), Gabon, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mexico, Nauru, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Singapore, Switzerland (province of Schaffhausen), Thailand, Turkey and Uruguay," reported Sabir Shah of The News International on Feb. 4, 2013. "Of the 31 countries with compulsory voting system, around a dozen nations (and Schaffhausen, a province/canton of Switzerland) actually enforce it."

So, with the primary election coming next month, we wanted to know:

"Should voting be mandatory? Why or why not?"

Your answers

“Absolutely NOT. The government doesn't need to control my entire life. Voter IDs should be mandatory though for those who are going to vote.” —

Tom Osborn

“NOT! An uneducated vote is worse than no vote at all!” — **Amanda**

Koetter

“No way! Too many people are ignorant about current events.” — **Ashley**

Hamm

“No, voting should not be mandatory. The public needs to be better educated about their government and how to make choices.” — **Monty**

Henderson

“Should it be mandatory for all politician's to tell the truth?” — **Tom**

Devenport

Our answers

“The circulation department says ‘NO!’” — **Jessyka Betzner**

“Voting is a fundamental right of any free country. Forcing people to do it is so ironic it would make the Constitution explode.” — **Steve Mullen**

“I'm awfully torn on this. There's no real feasible way to make it mandatory. What would the punishment be? Would our courts and jails be filled with

cases and subsequent prisoners who refused to vote? It's a person's civic duty to vote, but it's also their right not to. However, there are several demographics [that] are not represented well at the polls, and a better showing from those demographics, I'm confident, would dramatically change the outcomes of many elections.” — **Josh Sigler**

“My reaction has always been ‘no!’ I believe firmly in a right to indifference, apathy or protest (I do not vote in primaries except on special occasions because I don't think it's the government's business to hold primaries, they should be party matters). I also believe in voting, but not voting in races where you know nothing about the candidates or have no view on the job (this would include many of those races for administrative positions which should have absolutely nothing to do with party affiliation, yet for some reason are voted on instead of simply appointed). Would mandatory voting mean people have to vote in every race? Not comfortable with that. However I would be interested in how mandatory voting would change statistics. It would vary wildly from state to state and area to area. Mandatory voting strikes me as very totalitarian. I know some non-totalitarian countries have that, but it strikes me as an iffy policy even for them. Side note: It would never fly in the U.S. Never, never, never. There are swaths of people who are sure that census info is somehow nefarious government meddling. If we were to institute mandatory voting, you'd up the agitation level of paranoid people on the fringes of politics and somewhere, one of them would do something violent.” — **Pedro Velazco**

“I don’t know about making it mandatory, but it certainly should be easier. We should remove the voter ID laws which are clearly made to discourage certain populations from voting. We should also remove barriers for nonviolent ex-convicts from voting. (In Indiana, disenfranchisement ends after release, but this varies from state to state.) Election Day should be a paid national holiday. People should be able to vote from their smartphone. People decry uninformed voters, but then do nothing to further public education on the issues. All they want to do is create more barriers to citizen participation. We already had a system of only landowning, white, male citizens being allowed in the voting booths. Whose interests do you suppose were the only ones being served by the politicians they elected?” —

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